

# Reading Toolkit: Grade 7 Objective 3.A.6.a

Standard 3.0 Comprehension of Literary Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Literary Text

Indicator 6. Analyze important ideas and messages in literary texts

Objective a. Analyze main ideas and universal themes

Assessment Limits:

Literal versus interpretive meanings of a text or a portion of text

Literal versus interpretive meanings of a text or a portion of text

Experiences, emotions, issues, and ideas in a text that give rise to universal themes

Experiences, emotions, issues, and ideas in a text that give rise to universal themes

## Table of Contents

### Objective 3.A.6.a Tools

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- Lesson Seeds
- Public Release Item #1 - Brief Constructed Response (BCR)
  - Annotated Student Responses
- Sample Item #1 - Brief Constructed Response (BCR)
  - Annotated Student Responses

### Indicator 3.A.6 Tools

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- Clarification

### Scoring Rubric

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- Rubric - Brief Constructed Response

### Handouts

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- Scrambled Eggs

## Lesson Seeds

### Reading Grade 7 Objective 3.A.6.a

#### Activities

The teacher will place students in small groups and provide them with a literary text. After reading the text, students will be given envelopes which contain sentence strips. The sentence strips will list the main idea of the literary text, supporting details for that main idea, and details that do not support the main idea. The group of students must isolate the main idea and its supporting details from the available materials. Students will share their answers with other class members.

After students have read a required literary text, they will discuss the passage. During class discussion, the teacher will record the important ideas in the passage and ask students to give him/her supporting details for those important ideas. When the discussion is concluded, the teacher will place the students in small groups. Each group will be asked to create an alternate title for the passage and then present it to the rest of the class. During the presentation students will show how their title reflects an important idea in the passage.

Prior to reading, students will be asked to share times when someone did something kind for them or they were kind to another. The teacher will state that kindness is often a topic for themes in literary works. Students will then read Shel Silverstein's "The Giving Tree" or a like-themed literary passage. While students read these passages they should record the ways in which kindness is shown in these texts. After reading, students should share with the entire class the evidences of kindness they found. Next, with teacher assistance, students should form a theme statement for the text. Following this, the teacher should place students into small groups giving each group a text which they must read and analyze to complete the following chart.

Title	Theme Topic	Supporting Details for Theme	Theme Statement	Application to Real Life Situations

As texts are passed from one group to another, each text should be entered on the chart. Once all groups have seen all the texts, students will share their responses with the other members of the class.

As students read a novel or any longer literary work, they will track the development of theme. When appropriate at certain stages in the novel, teacher and students will isolate theme topics and will develop theme statements. In small groups or as an entire class with teacher direction, students will trace the beginning of the theme to its conclusion. Students will identify the origin of the theme. Did it begin with character, setting, or conflict or a combination of elements? Teacher Note: A suggested way for students to see the interrelatedness of narrative elements is to map the novel's plot and then alongside plot the origin and development of the theme/s. Once students have completed tracking the theme, in a class or small group discussion they should apply the theme to real-life situations.

## Clarification

### Reading Grade 7 Indicator 3.A.6

To show proficiency of the skills stated in this indicator, a reader will express an understanding of the key points or thoughts in a literary text which are the **important ideas and messages**. Sometimes these points are stated directly in the text. For other more complex texts, a reader must determine an implied, important idea or message by synthesizing ideas across the text.

To **identify, explain, and analyze main ideas and universal themes**, a reader must first identify the main idea of a text or a portion of a text. In order to do this, a reader must identify the topic or subject of the text. To determine what an author of a literary text has to say about the topic, a reader must attend to details that relate to or clarify the topic. This combination of topic and details forms the main idea. The main idea may be directly stated or implied and may appear in any portion of a text.

While a main idea is text-centered, a theme is author-centered. A story's theme is an author's message about a topic. To identify a theme of a literary text, a reader must first find broader important concepts in a text such as family, prejudice, courage, or love. A reader must observe carefully what characters say and do that relates to the theme topic. A theme is a combination of a "big" idea and what is said about that idea. A theme is a recurring idea in a text, but it also moves outside the text and applies to people in general, not just the characters in the story.

In more complex texts, theme can arise not only from character statements and actions but also from emotional and societal issues experienced by characters. These issues can be observed in changes in characters' values or beliefs, symbols, repeated words, or imagery. Readers can bring different interpretations to a text based upon their personal experiences. If evidence from a text can be provided to support a reader's suggestion about theme, then it is valid.

To **identify, explain, and analyze a similar idea or theme in more than one text**, a reader must first identify an idea or theme in each literary text. Once ideas or theme statements for each text are established, comparison between or among the texts can begin.

A reader may focus on similar ideas contained in multiple texts. A reader may focus on morals or lessons learned by characters contained in multiple texts. For younger readers, multicultural renderings of the same fairy tale are common. The conclusions drawn from similar texts are text-specific and based on many supporting details from each text.

A reader may focus on common experiences, emotions, issues, and ideas as sources for theme topic and statements in texts. The best conclusions drawn about theme across multiple texts are text specific, based on many supporting details from all texts. As comparisons among text themes continue, each theme must be analyzed carefully. Not only should the theme statement be considered but also how the author relayed the theme to the reader. For example, in one text, the strongest source for theme may have been character action, while in another text, the strongest source for theme may have been imagery. However, both texts may have similar themes that have been developed in different ways.

To **retell, paraphrase, or summarize a text**, a reader must first read and know the basic narrative elements of a text: the setting, character, and story events. When retelling, a reader must share the story in his/her own words, keeping story events in order.

Paraphrasing allows a reader to take a more complex text and make it understood by placing difficult ideas into simpler language. When a reader can tell a story in words that make sense to him/her, that reader is paraphrasing. As lengths of stories increase, multiple characters appear, and changes in setting occur within a text, paraphrasing increases in complexity.

When a reader can distinguish between necessary and unnecessary ideas and recount only the important ideas in his/her own words, he/she is summarizing. When summarizing, a critical reader paraphrases the important text. As texts grow in complexity, summarizing allows a reader to focus on the essential elements of a literary passage.

To **reflect on, identify, and explain personal connections to the text**, a reader must consider all elements of a literary text: setting, character, story events, mood, tone, and theme. Next, a reader must consider his/her personal experiences and relate them to one or more elements of a text. A reader might consider himself/herself or a friend or family member to be like a character from a text. A reader might discover that his/her attitude toward a particular subject mirrors an author's tone toward the same subject. A reader might hold the same belief revealed in a theme statement or find himself/herself in direct opposition to the idea in a theme. Once this connection is established, a critical reader is able to define how this connection is made and to construct meaning from a text, citing both text and personal details.

To **explain the implications of the text for the reader and/or society**, a reader must first consider ideas from a text that involve the reader in a personal way. A source for such ideas could be the events that befall certain characters, unfamiliar settings, the author's tone toward certain subjects, or thematic development of the text. A critical reader should define the literary element and then explain the level of involvement with that element and the effect it has had upon the reader's thinking. For example, a reader who has always been ambivalent about preserving the forests might alter his/her opinion after reading a text where forest preservation is promoted through theme. Through the explanation, the reader clarifies his/her own thought processing and makes his/her position clear to others.

## Public Release Item #1 Brief Constructed Response (BCR) Item with Annotated Student Responses

### Question

Read "Scrambled Eggs" and answer the following question. Explain a theme developed in this story. Use details from the story to support your answer. Write your answer in your answer book.

### Annotated Student Responses

A theme that was developed from the story "Scrambled Eggs" was that you should never take advantage of people by accusing them of something that would never happen. The innkeeper cannot use the excuse "if those ten eggs had hatched, I would have ten chickens" because he already had served the farmer the scrambled eggs and also, those kinds of eggs do not hatch. It was bad of the farmer to take that long to repay his debt, but the innkeeper shouldn't have tried to take advantage of him.

Score for Sample Student Response #1: Rubric Score 3

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text. The student identifies a theme; "that you should never take advantage of people by accusing them of something that would never happen." The student effectively uses text-relevant information to clarify the understanding by recognizing that "it was bad of the farmer to take that long to repay his debt," and also by addressing the fallacy of the innkeeper's argument that "he had already served the farmer the scrambled eggs and also, those kinds of eggs do not hatch."

The theme developed in this story was that you should forgive someone for a miniscule mistake. If the inn-keeper had charged the original fee for the eggs, he wouldn't have lost 100 Kroner. Instead of just forgiving the farmer for his forgetfulness, he got impatient and greedy. I think this was an important theme developed by the story.

Score for Sample Student Response #2: Rubric Score 2

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates a general understanding of the text. The student identifies a theme; "you should forgive someone for a miniscule mistake," and uses text-relevant information to show understanding of the theme, "If the innkeeper had charged the original fee for the eggs, he wouldn't have lost 100 kroner...."

The theme in this story is to never try to cheat for a person's money. In the story, the innkeeper was trying to get the farmer's money by claiming that he could have made more money with some scrambled eggs.

Score for Sample Student Response #3: Rubric Score 1

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text. The student identifies a theme, "never try to cheat for a person's money." The student uses minimal information, "the innkeeper was trying to get the farmer's money by claiming that he could have made more money with some scrambled eggs," to show some understanding of the text in relation to the question.

A theme that was developed in this story was about eggs. An example from the text is "According to my calculations, you owe me four thousand kroner." The whole story was about a conflict over scrambled eggs.

Score for Sample Student Response #4: Rubric Score 0

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response is completely incorrect.

## Sample Item #1 Brief Constructed Response (BCR) Item with Annotated Student Responses

### Question

Read the story 'Scrambled Eggs' and answer the following question.

Explain what the innkeeper probably learns from his experience. In your response, use details and examples from the story that support your explanation.

### Annotated Student Responses

The innkeeper probably learned that it's better to keep what you have. If the farmer had paid him the original cost he would have earned money. Instead, he choose to charge the farmer more than what he really owed. The farmer would have to pay for chickens that don't exist. Next time the innkeeper would rather settle for the 10 kroner than losing 100 kroner.

Annotation: The student states that the innkeeper learned to "keep what you have," and uses details from the story that support the suggested lesson. The student explains that had the innkeeper accepted the original amount, "he would have earned money," however, the innkeeper did not "settle for the 10 kroner," he lost 100 kroner. The additional details from the story help the student's explanation.



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Annotation: The student states that the innkeeper learned "that if somebody treats you nicely you should treat them the same way not unfairly." The student explains this lesson by using details from the story, "the farmer was being nice by apologizing," but the innkeeper was being unfair by charging "him more for the scrambled eggs." This response leaves out many details that would complete the explanation, such as the fact that the innkeeper actually lost money because of his greed and deception.

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Annotation: The student states the lesson learned by the innkeeper, "if you are dishonest on purpose, you will be punished worse." The student attempts to explain this lesson by using details from the story; "the judge was outraged by the innkeeper's greed and desepction." However, the student states the punishment, "he fined him 100 kroner" but does not explain how the punishment is "worse."

## Handouts

## Scrambled Eggs A Story from Denmark

By Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss

A farmer once set off to market to sell his cattle. The way was long and tiresome, and the roads were bad, so one night he stopped at an inn to get a good night's sleep. In the morning, he ate a hearty breakfast of scrambled eggs. As he was about to pay, he realized he might run short of money before he got to market. He asked the innkeeper to trust him to pay for the eggs the next time he passed through. The innkeeper readily agreed, and the farmer went on his way.

After selling his cattle, he headed home. Not remembering the few small coins he owed the innkeeper, he took a different route. A few years later, when he finally passed by the inn once again, he remembered his debt. He apologized to the innkeeper and asked what he owed for the eggs. The innkeeper handed him a large sheet of paper covered with numbers. He said, "This is your bill. According to my calculations, you owe me four thousand kroner<sup>1</sup>." (That's approximately four thousand dollars in American money!)

<sup>3</sup>At first, the farmer thought it was a joke, but he soon realized the innkeeper was quite serious. "You ate ten eggs," said the innkeeper, "and if those had hatched, I would have had ten chickens. They, too, would have laid eggs, and so on. I have determined that, in the four years since you were here, I could have made four thousand kroner from those ten scrambled eggs."

The farmer protested, but it was no use. He was summoned to appear before the town judge the next day.

The farmer realized he would need a good, honest lawyer to defend him. He asked around town until he found one. The lawyer was outraged when he heard what the innkeeper had charged. He agreed to appear in court the next day to settle the matter.

All arrived in court the next afternoon at the appointed time—except the lawyer. Just as the judge was about to throw the farmer into jail, the lawyer rushed in.

The judge, who did not like to be kept waiting, asked sternly, "Are you this man's lawyer?"

<sup>8</sup>"Yes, I certainly am," replied the lawyer as he tried to catch his breath.

"Why are you late?" demanded the judge. "Do you think we have nothing better to do than wait for you?"

<sup>10</sup>"I'm very sorry, your honor," said the lawyer, still panting. "I lost track of time while I was boiling two bushels of corn and planting them in my field this morning."

<sup>11</sup>There was a roar of laughter in the courtroom. The judge asked, "Sir, have you lost your mind? You don't actually think that cooked corn will grow, do you?"

<sup>12</sup>"Well, if scrambled eggs can turn into chicks, then why not?" The judge understood the lawyer's point. He was outraged by the innkeeper's greed and deception. The judge fined him one hundred kroner, fifty to go to the clever lawyer, and fifty to the farmer.

The farmer thanked the lawyer for his cleverness and happily returned home. After that, he loved to tell the story of how he had once received fifty kroner for eating a plate of scrambled eggs.

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<sup>1</sup> Kroner is pronounced KRO-ner. This is the plural of krone, which is the Danish money unit, similar to an American dollar.

## Rubric - Brief Constructed Response (BCR)

### Score 3

The response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text.

- Addresses the demands of the question
- Effectively uses text-relevant<sup>1</sup> information to clarify or extend understanding

### Score 2

The response demonstrates a general understanding of the text.

- Partially addresses the demands of the question
- Uses text-relevant<sup>1</sup> information to show understanding

### Score 1

The response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text.

- Minimally addresses the demands of the question
- Uses minimal information to show some understanding of the text in relation to the question

### Score 0

The response is completely incorrect, irrelevant to the question, or missing.<sup>2</sup>

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Text-relevant: This information may or may not be an exact copy (quote) of the text but is clearly related to the text and often shows an analysis and/or interpretation of important ideas. Students may incorporate information to show connections to relevant prior experience as appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> An exact copy (quote) or paraphrase of the question that provides no new relevant information will receive a score of "0".

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